

## **Belford Hospital Replacement Project Back on Track**

### **Major healthcare development moves forward with new timelines announced**

The Lochaber Redesign project, including the long-awaited replacement for Belford Hospital on the Blàr Mòr, near Fort William has officially remobilised after a period of pause, with NHS Highland confirming that work is now progressing in earnest.

Heather Cameron, Senior Programme Manager with NHS Highland, highlights that the project has been actively moving forward since the beginning of 2025, with the external design team formally resuming work in April. The project has adopted a new structure that separates the building work from health service planning elements, with local hospital and senior acute services colleagues leading the service delivery aspects alongside the lead for community-based services. The good news is that we have been able to maintain consistency over who is involved:

"We've got the same design and delivery team as before with pretty much all the same people which is great for continuity" Cameron explained.

The design team has completed a thorough review of their previous work and confirmed that the original brief remains unchanged. The project is now well through Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stage 2 (Concept Design), which includes overall floor plans for each hospital level, indicative elevations, sections and site plans, and strategies for the structural and services design. All design work has now been checked and approved by hospital staff as well as technical stakeholders, including infection control experts, accessibility consultants and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineering specialists.

The next design phase, RIBA Stage 3, which we expect to complete in January 2026, will see the Concept Design developed in more detail, including for example the development of detailed layouts for each room and confirming the mechanical and electrical infrastructure needed for different items of equipment. This will be further developed in Stage 4, with formal design review points at the end of each stage, before construction begins at Stage 5.

### **Timeline and Next Steps**

NHS Highland has shared updated timelines with the Lochaber Community stakeholder group, which includes representatives from various local community councils. The outline business case is scheduled for submission to the Scottish Government in May 2026, with the full business case following in July 2027. Construction is planned to begin in the second half of October 2027.

The community can continue to stay informed about the project's progress through NHS Highland's website, which features a dedicated section on the Lochaber redesign including frequently asked questions and regular updates. This ensures transparency as the project moves through its critical design and approval phases toward delivering modern healthcare facilities in Lochaber.